

HUMAN RESOURCES

**STAFF AND STUDENT PERSONAL
RELATIONSHIPS POLICY**

- 1.8 Where a relationship exists between members of staff where there is no direct supervision, control or influence over funding, or assessment of performance, but the relationship may give rise to real or perceived conflict of interest, power or control,

there is a significant power imbalance and the party without power feels pressured to continue in the relationship against their will.

3.7 Capacity to consent

Capacity is about whether someone is physically and/or mentally able to make a choice and to understand the consequences of that choice. For example, a person does not have the capacity to give consent if they are asleep or unconscious. Capacity to consent may be inhibited by the influence of drugs or alcohol or the presence of a cognitive or learning difficulty, or mental health condition.

3.8 Grooming

Grooming can be defined as a gradual process that someone in a position of power uses to manipulate someone to do things they may not be comfortable with and to make them less likely to reject or report abusive behaviour. Grooming will initially start as befriending someone and making them feel special and may result in sexual abuse and/or exploitation.

3.9 Intimate relationship

An intimate relationship is a consensual romantic (but not necessarily sexual) or sexual relationship which goes beyond the bounds of a platonic or working relationship. An intimate relationship could be brief, and includes a one-off occurrence.

3.10 Position of trust

A legal term which describes any situation wherein a staff member works closely with children, young people, or adults at risk.

4.0 Relationships with students or staff under the age of 18 or who are considered to be vulnerable

- 4.1 Members of staff must not be in, or enter into, an intimate relationship with any student or staff member under the age of 18, or any adult who may be considered as vulnerable.
- 4.2 Staff must not engage in sexual behaviour with someone with whom they are in a position of trust. Whilst a young person can consent to sexual activity once they reach the age of 16, the Sexual Offences Act (2003) makes it a criminal offence for a person to engage in sexual activity of any kind with a person under the age of 18, where the adult is in a position of trust.
- 4.3 Anyone suspecting a member of staff of acting inappropriately towards a student or staff member under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult should contact their senior line-manager and a senior member of the HR department.

5.0 Relationships between staff and students

- 5.1 LSHTM prohibits close personal and intimate relationships between staff and students where the staff member has a direct responsibility for, or involvement in, LSHTM strongly discourages any other form of close personal and intimate relationships between any staff and student. PhD students who are employed temporarily or permanently as staff (including as demonstrators) are considered as members of staff. Direct responsibility includes direct line-management, direct supervision,

5.6 Examples of unacceptable behaviour from staff towards students (please note that the below is not an exhaustive list):

physical touching, that could be construed as sexualised (e.g. touches of the shoulder or squeezes of the leg), or comments or questions of a sexual nature (whether verbally or electronically);

paying undue special attention to a particular student in a way which could be seen as grooming;

accepting gifts from a student, unless it is following final assessment completion and/or deemed to be a minor token of thanks in accordance with

use their LSHTM email account, telephone (including Microsoft Teams), software and applications, and internet access for work-related communications with staff and maintain professional communications;

be aware that any e-mail or message sent to or about a colleague may be disclosed within LSHTM procedures or legal proceedings.

write and communicate with colleagues in a professional and business style;

establish boundaries between professional and non-professional communication with colleagues;

adhere to the same guidelines, where logistically possible, when participating in teaching, fieldwork, conferences and other LSHTM activities when

confirmed breach of this policy will be investigated in line with relevant LSHTM disciplinary and conduct policies.

- 7.3 Failure to disclose a close personal or intimate relationship with a student where there is no direct supervision, or with a colleague where there is a real or perceived conflict of interest, breach of trust or confidentiality, will also be investigated in line with relevant LSHTM disciplinary and conduct policies.
- 7.4 For the avoidance of doubt, behaviour of a sexual nature is not permitted on LSHTM premises, or during the course of your employment activities, regardless of the circumstances, the individuals involved, or consent.

8.0 Existing or previous relationships

- 8.1 This section applies to relationships which are in existence at the date from which this policy is effective 1 December 2022 and to relationships which have occurred within the past two years of the policy being published.
- 8.2 Members of staff must, within 3 months of this policy being published, declare any existing and/or previous (within the past two years) close personal or intimate relationships with students, in confidence to their HR Partner.
- 8.3 Members of staff must, within 3 months of this policy being published, declare any existing and/or previous (within the past two years) close personal or intimate relationships with colleagues, to their HR Partner, where there has been line-management responsibility, or where there could be a potential or perceived conflict of interest.

9.0 Declaration of intimate or close relationships

- 9.1 All declarations are to be made as soon as reasonably practicable and always within one month.
- 9.2 As any such declaration that contains sensitive personal data will be stored securely and managed in compliance with data protection legislation. Such declarations will be treated respectfully, sensitively, and confidentially to the fullest possible extent considering measures that may need to be put in place, and the wishes of both parties respected as far as is possible. This includes same-
- 9.3 Staff who are unsure whether a relationship they have with a student or staff member relationship, should seek prompt advice from their line-manager, Head of Department, or their HR Partner. Staff are particularly encouraged to seek advice if the other party expressly does not wish the relationship to be declared.
- 9.4 Students who are unsure whether a relationship they have with a staff member constitutes a close personal or intimate relationship should seek prompt advice from their personal tutor, the Programme Director for their MSc, Taught Programme Director or [Student Support and Wellbeing Team](#).
- 9.5 Staff and students must both complete a [Personal Relationship Declaration Form](#).
- 9.6 This form should be completed even if the relationship was previously declared on a job or course application form.

Step 1 - Staff should submit the form to their HR Partner, who may need to discuss the details with the staff member and/or with the line-manager and/or Head of Department. Research Degree students should submit

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